



March Agricultural Survey

United States Department of Agriculture

National Agricultural Statistics Service

March 2009

The March Agricultural Survey (also known as the Crops/Stocks Survey) is one of the most important yearly surveys conducted by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). It provides the official USDA estimates of U.S. farmers' planting intentions for 2009, offering a glimpse of the upcoming growing season.

HOW ARE THE DATA COLLECTED?

The March Agricultural Survey is conducted annually in all states except Alaska and Hawaii. NASS will collect data from approximately 77,000 farms, which are selected from among the nation's 2.2 million farms. Beginning in late February, farm operators will be contacted and may respond using one of the following data collection methods:

- Telephone – Computer-assisted telephone interviewing (or CATI) is the primary method.
- Mail – Participants fill out and mail back the questionnaire that was mailed to them.
- Internet – Secure, online reporting is the timeliest, most cost-effective option.
- Personal interviews – Respondents can request an interview with a NASS representative.

The information collected about specific commodities varies somewhat from state to state. But all participating producers will be asked to provide information on the crop acreage they intend to plant for 2009, as well as quantities of grains and oilseeds stored on-farm.

HOW IS THE INFORMATION USED?

Once results of the survey are compiled and analyzed, NASS will publish the information in a series of reports. These include the *Prospective Plantings* report and the quarterly *Grain Stocks* report, both to be released on March 31, 2009. The *Prospective Plantings* report reveals U.S. farmers' planting intentions for 2009, including acreage estimates. Survey data also contribute to NASS's monthly *Crop Production* reports.

All sectors of the agricultural industry rely on NASS acreage, production and stocks estimates to help make sound business decisions. For instance:

- The *Prospective Plantings* report provides the first insight into the year's crop supplies and is used nation- and worldwide to establish futures and commodity prices.
- It is one of the most timely, accurate and important sources of information for producers when making critical decisions for their operation and finalizing their cropping and marketing plans.
- The information assures international customers that the United States will continue to be a reliable supplier of major commodities and enables the industry to evaluate export potential.
- Universities, Extension agents, private and government economists, the farm media and others depend on the data to help them analyze what's on the horizon.

The information provided by survey respondents is confidential by law. NASS safeguards the privacy of all responses and publishes only state- and national-level data, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified.

All reports are available through the NASS web site: www.nass.usda.gov. For more information on NASS surveys and reports, call the NASS Agricultural Statistics Hotline at (800) 727-9540.